DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 250 732 CS 504 740

AUTHOR Olson, Clark D.
TITLE Theoretical Considerations and Standards for the Use of Turnarounds.
PUB DATE Nov 84
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (70th, Chicago, IL, November 1-4, 1984).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Debate; *Evaluation Criteria; Higher Education; Judges; *Persuasive Discourse; Standards
IDENTIFIERS Debate Format; Debate Strategy; *Turnarounds (Debate)

ABSTRACT

The term "turnaround" has taken a permanent place among the intercollegiate debate jargon. All too often, the first affirmative rebuttalists charge "turnaround" for every plan or response they do not know how to label properly. After so many "false alarms," judges are too weary or aggravated to notice the real thing, and many judges are commenting on this problem in their debate philosophies. For these reasons, there should be some uniform criteria for turnarounds, so that debaters and judges alike can distinguish real turnarounds from fake ones. A disadvantage may be turned in either of two ways: (1) if debaters turn the "links" to the disadvantage, they claim that it is not the affirmative plan that will accrue the disadvantage, but rather the very system--whether the status quo or the counterplan--the negative team is defending; (2) should debaters turn the "impact" of the advantage, they claim that the resulting impact of the disadvantage is really not the evil the negative team has disguised it to be, but actually provides even greater advantages than the affirmative had claimed. One way to judge turnarounds is to determine whether they meet the prima facie burdens of the affirmative argument. That is, a turnaround must have supporting evidence and adequate explanation, it must be topical, and its impact must outweigh the other disadvantages, or at least do so coupled with the remaining case significance. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED250732

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND STANDARDS FOR THE USE OF TURNAROUNDS

Clark D. Olson
Arizona State University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Clark D. Olson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Speech Communication Association Convention, Chicago, Illinois, November 1984

CS 504 740

Recently the term "turnaround" has been tossed around so frequently in intercollegiate debate that it has taken its place in debate jargon along with "counterplan and "meatball." However, to date, little has been written about the theoretical nature of the turnaround and its use in intercollegiate debate. The most recent textbooks on debate theory mention the term, but do not set forth any guidelines for its use, the primary discussion is merely explanatory.[1] The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of turnarounds as presently used in debate and to provide some standards for use which will hopefully prove helpful to both those advancing turnarounds and those evaluating them.

First affirmative rebuttalists have screamed "turnaround" very frequently, particularly in the wake of so many generic disadvantages. It seems that the only way for an affirmative team to stave off the ravages of nuclear destruction or collapse of the species is to prove that they are able to prevent the problem. This would be fine if debaters would truly do all they claim they have done by the end of a debate round. Far too frequently the term "turnaround" is cast about with only an unintelligible tag line as disadvantage response number eleven, so that its true menaing is buried somewhere between a press for uniqueness and a press for threshhold. Judges are tiring of hearing this phrase overused as many are commenting about this sin in their judging philosophies.[2] All too often the first affirmative rebuttalist yells "turnaround" for every plan response he or she doesn't know how to properly label, with the result being that of the boy who cried "wolf," after a number of false alarms, when the real thing comes along, a judge is too weary or aggravated to take notice. It is for these reasons that there

should be some uniform criteria for turnarounds, so that debaters and judges alike can recognize true turnarounds and ferret out fake ones. It is the intent of this paper to propose such guidelines.

Patterson and Zarefsky comment that a disadvantage may be turned in either of two ways:

> The affirmative can grant that the disadvantage really is an evil but argue that the same evil will be present to a greater degree if the resolution is not affirmed--hence providing an on-balance argument in favor of the resolution. Or the affirmative can argue that the alleged evil really is a benefit and hence an additional reason to support the resolution.[3]

This statement can be simplified by noting that one can turn either the links to the disadvantage OR the impact. If a debater turns the links to the disadvantage, he or she claims that it is not the affirmative plan which will accrue the disadvantage, but the very system, be it the status quo or counterplan, the negative is defending. Therefore to avoid risking the perils of the impact of the originally presented disadvantage, the resolution must be adopted and the affirmative accepted. Should a debate turn the impact of the disadvantage, and this often involves a few more tricks, he or she claims that the resulting impact of the disadvantage is really not the evil the negative has disguised it to be, but actually provides even greater advantages than the affirmative had origianally claimed.

It would seem the EITHER of these two methods would appropriately turn around a negative disadvantage. However, in their zeal, first affirmative rebuttalists must beware not to turn both the links and the impact, for then they would be in the unfortunate situation of double turning the disadvantage. When the argument is sorted out by the clever second negative rebuttalist, it would appear that now the wrath of the

new impact would be upon the affirmative, and the original purpose of the disadvantage served, with the added delight of the negative witnessing the affirmative beating themselves.

One other caveat seems appropriate before seeking to set forth the minimum requirements for a turnaround. And that is, when the strategy of turnarounds is appropriate. Lately, many debaters, not solely first affirmative rebuttalists, have been using the term on every argument on the flow. However, in order to be truly useful, it must be limited to use on disadvantages. Simple logic should bear this out. Turnarounds cannot apply to plan meet advantage arguments. Affirmative plans cannot become more solvent because they have beaten a negative circumvention argument. At best, they may achieve the 100% solvency their plan is hopefully designed to achieve. There is no way for a plan to be 110% solvent. To do so would be to create problems for the plan to solve. Similarly, turnarounds do not apply to topicality arguments. An affirmative case cannot become more topical as a result of a negative topicality attack, either the affirmative case is topical or it isn't. This is similar to the pregnancy illustration, either a woman is pregnant, or she isn't, there's no in between.

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the burdens a turnaround should meet in order to justifiably provide the affirmative with an added advantage to warrant an affirmative ballot. Some have argued that turnarounds must meet all of the stock issues: topicality, significance, inherency, solvency, and disadvantages. And indeed, many turnaround-minded second negatives have carefully worded F subpoints in their disadvantages which totally preempt the concept of turnarounds. But within the realistic constraints of debate, during rebuttals, a team can hardly

be expected to present an entire mini-affirmative case. When one analyzes several of the stock issues, it is apparent that by virtue of the fact that an argument has been presented or progressed to the status that it is being attacked by the first affirmative rebuttalist, it should have already met several of these stock issue burdens. Take significance, for example, where the affirmative must prove that a problem exists. If a disadvantage is really worth turning, the significance of the problem has already been presented in the original structure of the disadvantage in the impact statements. The same is true for inherency. Typically the affirmative must prove that the resolution is necessary to overcome some problem. Now if the disadvantage is truly unique to a plan which falls within the perview of the resolution, the disadvantage should justify action. Similarly, if the disadvantage is turned, action via the resolution should be justified. The key to achieving these two stock issues is not in the first affirmative rebuttalist's analysis, but in the original structure of the disadvantage. To be significant, the disadvantage needs to have great impact; to be inherent, the disadvantage needs to be unique. So ultimately, the requirements of these stock issues fall squarly on the original presenter of the disadvantage, typically the second negative. It is obvious then, that affirmatives should take note: all disadvantages are not worth turning. In order to fulfill major burdens, the first affirmative rebuttalist must rely on the negative to provide a decent disadvantage.

Solvency is on a different plane. Solvency, in and of itself, is difficult to concretely establish at any level, even in the first affirmative constructive speech. In turning disadvantages, the evidence

frequently just gives an alternate or opposite conclusion to the disadvantage, without establishing any measurable level of solvency. This, then, becomes difficult for the judge to weight as an argument with no demonstrable level of solvency is difficult to vote for. If a debater turns the links to the disadvantage, the impact remains the same, and the judge need only calculate the original impact of the disadvantage. For example, if a first affirmative rebuttalist turns a link to the keystone species disadvantage, the impact of the disadvantage remains the same, the judge needs only determine the risk or likelihood of such an occurance within the framework of the round. Again, this may prove to be a difficult task without the presence of some guiding criteria.

Perhaps one way to judge turnarounds is to see if they meet the prima facie burdens of the affirmative. But the meaning of this phrase is nearly as varied as the people who use it. Scott contends that the phrase entails completeness and consistency.[4] Freeley suggests that a prima facie case "must be both structurally and qualitatively strong. . . ."[5] It is obvious that this phrase cannot always apply to turnarounds for as Sanders concludes, "A prima facie case in academic debate is one that is completely presented in the first affirmative constructive speech and contains the essential elements of an affirmative case with evidentiary support for all of them."[6] Clearly, turnarounds cannot be presented in the first affirmative constructive speech. At best, some evidence from that speech may be used in establishing the turnaround, but the logic is subject to the initial presentation of the disadvantage which often does not occur until several speeches late in the debate. It would be much more reasonable and pragmatic to support Freeley's conclusion,

". . ./T/he affirmative must continue and support those issues with enough evidence and analysis to make a case both qualitatively and quantitatively strong enough to establish its case in the minds of reasonable decision renderers unless or until it is refuted or weakened."[7]

What, then, is a prima facie turnaround according to this definition? In order to be established as a true voting issue for the affirmative, I contend that a turnaround must have four essential components.

Initially, a turnaround must have <u>evidence</u>. Too often, a turnaround is merely spewed forth with no logical or rational backing, much less an explanation. If, indeed, the link of a disadvantage is reversed, or the impact is the opposite of that as claimed and evidenced by the negative, certainly the affirmative should be subject to the same burden as the negative who advances those claims; the burden to prove his or her assertions. Heavy penalties are levied on negative teams who deftly assert links or provide paltry assertions for impact: the argument is scorned by judges are rarely, if ever, voted upon. Likewise, the requirement should hold true for the affirmative seeking to claim an added advantage. This is especially ture when the affirmative wishes to turn the impact. If an apparent evil is really good, generally a reasoned opinion, other than that of the wise affirmative team, is necessary. For example, if the negative presents an unemployment disadvantage with the impact as increased alcohol consuption, to turn this impact, the affirmative would need scientific proof that says a drink a day decreases heart disease. So indeed, evidence does appear necessary to sustain a true turnaround. Now the evidence does not necessarily have to be original in the first affirmative rebuttal, If an affirmative can use evidence from a constructive

speech, that should suffice as acceptable proof of the claim. Better yet, if the affirmative can use evidence presented by the negative, the impact of the turnaround is all the more embedded in the judge's mind. Bear in mind, though, that any evidence used to initially establish a turnaround should either be presented or referred to by the first affirmative rebuttalist. Waiting for the last affirmative rebuttal to evidence a major claim does not give the negative a chance to refute the evidence, to say nothing of breeching the ethical ettiquette of debate. Therefore, with regard to fulfilling the prima facie burden, Gerald Sanders, after quoting Carl Moore, contends that a logically self-sufficient "case must go beyond assertion; there must be some evidence and reasoning involved before the case is complete."[8]

This statement leads to the second burden of turnarounds: adequate explanation. Far too often in the lightening speed of the first affirmative rebuttal, only a twisted tag line manages its way from the mouth of the first affirmative rebuttalist to the flowsheet of the judge, and the judge is left wondering why that argument is a turnaround. If the debater is lucky, the judge may have the patience to ask for the evidence after the round and determine at that point how that twisted tag was a turn. However, more and more, judges are rebelling at arguments they do not understand, and debaters are losing ballots because they have failed to make themselves clear. If the affirmative truly believes that a turnaround is worth voting for, they must be willing to explain it with all of the care they should have for their original case, complete with rhetoric and explanations. Again, it is up to the affirmative to decide how important the turnaround really is to their strategy, and to allot carefully appropriate time for it in rebuttals. Indeed, some rounds are decided on the basis of a lone turnaround as affirmatives

abandon their entire original case to go for a prolif turn. If such strategic decisions are made, absolute clarity is essential. And this clarity must occur from the time the argument is originally presented. It cannot merely be a tag to be later explained and expanded upon by an eloquent second affirmative rebuttalist. For judges to allow such tactics only promotes further rifts in the activity.

Thirdly, turnarounds must be topical. Despite what disadvantages the negative team presents, the affirmative team remains the advocate of the resolution. And theirjob, according to Freeley, is to "provide good and sufficient reason for adopting the proposition."[9] Regardless of how many wars an affirmative can prevent, or how many species can be saved, these advantages must stem from the adoption of the resolution, typically embodied in the topical affirmative plan. The key to remember is that the judge is not merely voting for an argument or a team, say the argument or team with the greatest impact at the end of the round, but in order to vote affirmative, the judge needs a reason to adopt the resolution. If a negative can successfully argue that a turnaround is nontopical, the argument bears the same weight as a case which is nontopical. In essence, then, topicality remains a pre-emptive issue, the one the judge must decide first. And in order for a judge to ballot on the basis of a turnaround, it must warrant the adoption of the resolution.

Finally, and perhaps most logically, the turnaround impact must outweigh the other disadvantages, or at least do so coupled with the remaining case significance. Again, all too often, affirmatives appeal to judges to vote for turnarounds, particularly if dropped, which have no impact. Also, the turned impact must be considered in comparison to the total impact of the disadvantage, as frequently a disadvantage will

have multiple impacts and the affirmative will turn only one, leaving the remaining impact to weigh against their case. Take the unemployment disadvantage as an example. Merely because the affirmative can prove that a drink a day decreases heart disease does not mitigate all of the other impacts to alcohol, such as liver damage, child and spouse abuse, lost productivity, etc. In the long run, a total analysis must be done, particularly by the last negative rebuttalist, to insure that no impact remains buried. Finally, the affirmative is still subject to the scrutiny of risk analysis which applies to the original disadvantage or even affirmative case significance for that matter. Merely turning an argument does not automatically insure its occurrance, as so many affirmatives would wish to believe. Instead, the relative risk of the turnaround, which is really a new affirmative advantage, must be calculated and weighted against the remaining negative attacks.

These four criteria may not be the only ones which debaters should heed. But at present, being evidenced, explained, topical, and outweighing other disadvantages appear as minimum justification for what a turnaround should meet. Perhaps if these guidelines are heeded by both debaters and judges, the rampant abuse of the term "turnaround" may be curbed and a fuller understanding of the argument "turning the tables" will be achieved.

END NOTES

[1]Such texts include: Austin J. Freeley, Argumentation and Debate, Reasoned Decision Making, 5th ed., (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981); J.W. Patterson and David Zarefsky, Contemporary Debate, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983); and Gerald H. Sanders, Introduction to Contemprary Academic Debate, 2nd ed., (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1983).

[2]The 1983 National Debate Tournament juding philosophy book included several critics who commented on the overuse of turnarounds and their unwillingness to accept such practices.

[3]Patterson and Zarefsky, p. 139.

[4]Robert L. Scott, "On the Meaning of the Term Prima Facie in Argumentation," in Jerry M. Anderson and Paul J. Dovre, eds., Readings in Argumentation, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 49.

[5]Freeley, p. 151.

[6]Sanders, pp. 44-5.

[7]Freeley, pp. 37-8.

[8]Sanders, p. 46.

[9]Freeley, p. 151.